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The Phoenix

The myth of the bird reborn from its own ashes, as told by Ovid

Alexandre Amato

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ABSTRACT

This brief text reproduces, from the poet Ovid, the myth of the phoenix. It explains that, although most beings are born of other individuals, there is a unique species that reproduces on its own, called the phoenix by the Assyrians. The bird feeds on incense and fragrant roots and, after living five hundred years, builds a nest atop an oak or a palm tree, gathering cinnamon, spikenard, and myrrh. Upon this pyre it settles and dies amid the perfumes. From its body arises a young phoenix, destined to live the same span, which carries the nest, its own cradle and its father's sepulcher, to the temple of the Sun in Heliopolis, Egypt. It is a short literary note evoking the classical symbol of death and rebirth.

KEYWORDS: *phoenix; mythology; ovid; rebirth; symbol; classical literature*

The Phoenix – "Most beings are born of other individuals, but there is a certain species that reproduces on its own. The Assyrians call it the phoenix. It does not live on fruits or flowers, but on incense and fragrant roots. After living five hundred years, it builds a nest in the branches of an oak, or at the top of a palm tree. In it, it gathers cinnamon, spikenard, and myrrh, and with these essences it builds a pyre upon which it settles, and dies, breathing its last breath amid the perfumes. From the bird's body arises a young phoenix, destined to live as long as its predecessor. After growing and gaining sufficient strength, it lifts the nest from the tree (its own cradle and its father's sepulcher) and carries it to the city of Heliopolis, in Egypt, depositing it in the temple of the Sun." OVID, poet

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